

XXI.—*Notes on Birds recently observed in Macedonia.*

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IN writing these notes on the avifauna of Macedonia, I have been careful to give only such facts as I can personally vouch for as to species identified, and in every one of the following cases I have myself had the specimen in my hands, except when so stated. I say this because, although there are undoubtedly capable ornithologists in this country, I have had statements made to me as to the existence of species which on investigation proved wholly incorrect. My informant, having trusted entirely to his impressions of birds on the wing, and never having handled the specimen, has fallen into error which, if perpetuated, would extend rather than advance the investigation of this interesting subject. I have kept a very careful diary from day to day, when possible, in which all my observations have been recorded, both of identified and unidentified species, together with notes of wind and weather, and I am hoping that I shall be able some day to collate these notes and illustrations which I trust may be of interest to other ornithologists.

On the front occupied by British troops in Macedonia the country varies from flat marshy ground bordering lakes partially covered by rushes, to rocky undulating ground resembling almost exactly the hilly country of Wales; some of this is bare but for a few thorn-bushes, and in other parts the country is covered with stunted oak-bushes and in some cases oak-trees of various ages. One of the first birds which attracted my attention on my arrival was the Little Bustard (*Otis tetrax*). During the winter large flocks of these frequent the flat country, showing a decided preference for cultivated land. Their flight is so strong and like that of a wild fowl that, for a time, until I obtained a specimen, I took them to be some small species of Goose. It was now a matter of considerable interest as to whether a few of these birds remain to breed, for at the time of writing (May 1) I still find four or five pairs frequenting similar ground having assumed the black and white band on the neck, which I

take to be their summer plumage. I shot two of these birds in December and one on March 31, the last of which was then just assuming this plumage.

Of the Turdidæ there are, so far as my observation goes, none left in the district now, but during the winter *Turdus musicus*, *T. merula*, *T. viscivorus*, *T. iliacus*, and *T. pilaris* all put in an appearance. The Corvidæ are well represented. *Corvus corax* is common and remains throughout the year, almost certainly breeding in the high ranges of mountains. *Corvus cornix* is common during the winter months, but, though I suspect him to be a resident, I cannot say that I have noticed him for the last two months. There is a bird which closely resembles the Hooded Crow (*C. corone*), but as pairs of them are still common and I have not yet handled a specimen, I hesitate to say anything more about it. *C. frugilegus* was during the winter the commonest of all the family. I have seen dense black masses of thousands feeding on a few square yards of horse-lines in an abandoned camp or whilst the horses were at exercise. They all appear to have migrated. The Jackdaw is particularly worthy of notice because this species appears to be a variety of the British species. It differs by having in almost every case a very light, almost white ring round the neck where the grey feathers end. It is no doubt *C. monedula collaris*. Another curious variety which I constantly notice has a dull rusty-red colouring extending over the primary, secondary, and tertiary wing-feathers. The species is exceedingly common, remains throughout the year, and breeds. *Picu rustica* is everywhere: when there are no trees it nests in thick low bushes. A native interpreter brought me a nest containing eight eggs and declared that three of them were laid by "the lazy one," which I assume referred to the Great Spotted Cuckoo (*Clamator glandarius*), but, as I have not seen this bird up to the present, I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this. *Garrulus glandarius* is not uncommon in suitable localities, but I am unable to say if it remains to breed. Of the Alaudidæ the only species which I have identified are the Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), Crested Lark

(*Galerida cristata*), and the Calandra Lark (*Melanocorypha calandra*). I have found the last two breeding.

The Raptores are here in large numbers, and, although my list of identified species is small, I have made careful notes of many others I have shot, and with the assistance of more experienced ornithologists I have no doubt that many interesting additions will eventually be made. One of the most interesting things which I have ever seen was the nest of a White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaëtus albicilla*). Let me say at once that I did not have this specimen in my hands, but I had exceptional opportunities of examining both male and female at only a short distance with the aid of field-glasses on many occasions during nidification, and I think the identification may be taken as being good. This nest was a huge structure of sticks in a tree some thirty feet from the ground on the bank of the Vardar River. It was on the 30th of March that I and another officer made the expedition. Climbing up to the nest I found two young about five days out of the egg and the usual complement of flies which were attracted by the larder. Two fish, a carp and a pike, each about 2 lb. in weight, and a mallard with head and skin removed lay on the nest. These birds, whilst not plentiful, are fairly frequently met with. The Hen-Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) was exceedingly common all the winter, but has now disappeared. The Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) is extremely common and breeds in considerable numbers in the roofs of houses in evacuated villages. The Red-footed Falcon (*F. vespertinus*) made its first appearance on April 23. The next day I noticed literally hundreds hawking about near a lake apparently for insects. They were very tame, and I secured a male and female. Their stomachs contained small winged insects and beetles. This bird appears to take its insect prey with its feet, and one sees it constantly close its wings and bending the head forward take something from its talons. All this time it is dropping in the air, but the process is so rapid and so gracefully performed that it has only fallen three or four feet before it is again resuming its flight. I took a specimen of *Accipiter nisus* in January,

but this species can hardly be described as being common. *Falco peregrinus* I have also identified, and as there are numerous suitable nesting-places I have no doubt it remains to breed. *Milvus milvus* is one of the commonest of the larger Raptores, whilst the Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) is almost equally plentiful. There are many other species which I hope to identify as time goes on.

The Herons are well represented, and there are at least six species, including the Common Heron, all of which, with the exception of two, I have obtained. *Botaurus stellaris* is comparatively common and its booming note is often heard. The Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) arrived about April 7. At present the flock of about 200 birds has shown no signs of breaking up. Terns began to arrive about April 23. These are almost all Black Terns, but a few White-winged Black Terns and a smaller number of Common Terns also arrived. There are now thousands of the first species, and as the locality appears highly suitable I have little doubt that they will soon breed. The Waders, never very easy, have been particularly hard to secure and identify, and I can only give three—the Redshank (*Totanus totanus*), the Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), of this I have only seen two, and the Lapwing (*Vannellus vannellus*). Much discussion locally has been occasioned by statements regarding the "Grey Geese" which frequented one part of the country in thousands during the winter. They were generally described as Grey-lag Geese, but some other ornithologists declared them to be White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons*). For myself I can only say this, that I had only one opportunity of handling a bird which was shot about March 10 by an officer of the A.V.C. This specimen was a Grey-lag. Possibly both species have been taken. About seventeen of these Geese still frequent the neighbourhood; sometimes they fly in pairs, sometimes singly, and at other times the whole flock can be seen grazing together.

A further detailed description can only become monotonous, so I append a list which covers most, if not quite all, the birds identified up to date. Those marked with an

asterisk have been identified at the Natural History Museum from specimens sent home.

B=Breeds. PB=Probably breeds. R=Resident. PR=Partially resident.

Dates indicate first observed appearance of migrants.

Corvus corax. R. PB.	Troglodytes troglodytes.
" cornix.	Hirundo rustica. B.
" m. collaris. R. PB.	Delichon urbica.
" frugilegus.	Riparia riparia.
Pica pica. R. B.	Dryobates major. R. B.
Garrulus glandarius.	Picus viridis.
Oriolus oriolus. 1/v.	Cuculus canorus. PB. 10/iv.
Carduelis carduelis. PR. PB.	Upupa epops. PB. 25/iii.
*Serinus serinus. 11/iii.	*Bubo b. bubo.
Passer domesticus. R. B.	Circus cyaneus.
" montanus. R. B.	Buteo buteo. R. B.
Fringilla cœlebs.	Milvus milvus. R. B.
*Acanthis cannabina.	Falco tinnunculus. R. B.
Emberiza citrinella.	* " vespertinus.
* " cirius. R. PB.	Phalacrocorax carbo.
* " melanocephala.	Anser anser. PB?
* " hortulana.	Anas boschas. R. PB.
* " cia.	Querquedula crecca. R. PB.
" miliaria. R. B.	Spatula clypeata. R. PB.
Alauda arvensis. PR.	Ardea cinerea.
*Lullula arborea.	* " purpurea.
Galerida cristata. R.	Botaurus stellaris. R. B.
*Calandrella brachydactyla.	Plegadis falcinellus. 7/iv.
Melanocorypha calaudra. RB.	Otis tetrax. PR.
Anthus pratensis.	*Glareola pratincola.
* " campestris.	Scolopax rusticola.
Sitta cœsia. RB.	Gallinago gallinago. PR.
Regulus regulus.	" media. Shot 2/iv.
Parus major.	Limnocyptes gallinula.
" ater.	*Tringa minuta.
" cæruleus.	* " subarquata.
* " lugubris. 11/iii.	Totanus totanus.
*Lanius minor.	* " glareola.
* " collurio.	Himantopus himantopus.
Sylvia communis. B. 20/iii.	Recurvirostra avocetta.
*Cettia cetti.	Sterna hirundo. 26/iv.
*Cisticola cisticola.	* " minuta.
*Aerocephalus schœnobænus.	Hydrochelidon nigra. 23/iv.
Turdus viscivorus.	" leucoptera. 24/iv.
" musicus.	Gallinula chloropus.
" iliacus.	Fulica atra.
" pilaris.	Columba œnas.
" merula.	" palumbus.
Phœnicurus titys.	Streptopelia turtur. R. PB.
Erithacus rubecula.	Phasianus colchicus. R. B.
Luscinia megarhyncha. B. 4/iv.	Caccabis rufa? R. B.
*Saxicola rubicola. R. B.	Perdix perdix. R. B.
" rubetra. PB. 30/iv.	Coturnix coturnix. PR. PB.
*Euanthe hispanica xanthomelana.	